

## GLOSSARY

**agricultural preserve** – Under the California Land Conservation Act (Williamson Act), an agricultural preserve defines the boundary of an area within which a city or county will enter into contracts with landowners to maintain land in agriculture or open space use.

**alternatives** – A collection of actions assembled to provide reasonable options for solutions to problems.

**biome** – Any of several major life zones of interrelated plants and animals determined by the climate, such as deciduous forest or desert.

**biota** – The plant and animal life of a region.

**biotic** – Living components of an ecosystem; all animals and plant life, including fungal and microorganisms.

**buildout** – The maximum planned capacity of an urban area based on their current General Plan. Planned buildout is rarely reached due to issues unforeseen during the broader General Plan process such as design, site constraints, growth management, and market forces.

**coastal zone** – A coastal zone is simply defined as the interface between the land and coast. For purposes of California coastal zone management, the coastal commission prepared and adopted a detailed map of the coastal zone and has filed a copy of the map with the county clerk of each coastal county.

**conditional use permit** – allows a city or county to consider special uses which may be essential or desirable to a particular community, but which are not allowed as a matter of right within a zoning district. Provides flexibility within a zoning ordinance.

**conservation easement** – Instrument of property ownership in which specified rights to property development are separated from landownership, usually to preclude any substantial change in the current use of the land. A conservation easement allows a landowner to continue to own and use his or her land and to sell it. However, the allowable uses of the land are permanently limited in order to protect its conservation values.

**critical habitat** – habitat designated as critical for a particular species under the Endangered Species Act, including areas on which are found those physical or biological features essential to the conservation of the species.

**cultural landscape** – a geographic area, including both the cultural and natural resources, associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or exhibiting cultural or aesthetic values. A way of seeing landscapes that emphasizes the interaction between human beings and

nature over time. A traditional ranching area might be part of a cultural landscape.

**cumulative impacts** – The incremental effects of an individual project reviewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects in order to ascertain the overall effect on the environment. A cumulative impact assessment is a requirement of NEPA.

**direct impacts (or effects)** – Primary environmental effects that are caused by a project and occur at the same time and place.

**ecotone** – A transitional zone between two adjacent ecological communities, containing species characteristic of both as well as other species occurring only within the zone.

**endangered species** – A species of animal or plant is considered to be endangered when its prospect for survival and production are in immediate jeopardy from one or more causes. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and/or the California Department of Fish and Game make this designation.

**endemic** – restricted to or native to a particular area or region.

**entitlement** – A permit or other instrument typically granted by local governments entitling the holder to develop or improve land and/or existing structures and facilities.

**environmental assessment (EA)** – A concise public document that provides evidence and analysis of the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of a proposed federal action. An EA provides sufficient information for determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). An EA includes brief discussions of the need for the proposal, of alternatives, of the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, and a listing of agencies and persons consulted. Required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

**environmental impact statement (EIS)** – A public document that provides evidence and analysis of the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of a proposed federal action, when that action is a major action that significantly affects the quality of the human environment. Required by NEPA.

**eolian** – borne, deposited, produced or eroded by the wind. For example, eolian landforms include sand dunes.

**feasibility study** – see “special resource study”.

**finding of no significant impact (FONSI)** – a document prepared by a Federal agency briefly presenting the reasons why a proposed action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and why an environmental impact statement therefore will not be prepared.

**floodplain** – Land on either side of a stream or river that is submerged during floods. Typically discussed in terms of 50, 100, or 500 year flood events.

**general plan** – document which controls land uses within its jurisdiction by establishing use categories and implementing plans through the county zoning ordinances.

**habitat** – The physical location or type of environment in which an organism or biological population lives or occurs; often characterized by a dominant plant form or physical characteristics (ie., the oak-savanna, wetland, or a coastal habitat).

**indirect impacts (or effects)** – Also referred to as secondary effects, indirect impacts are caused by a project and occur later in time or at some distance from the project; however, they are still reasonably foreseeable.

**infrastructure** – A general term describing public and quasi-public utilities and facilities such as roads, bridges, sewers and sewer plants, water lines, storm drainage, power lines, parks and recreation, public libraries, fire stations, sidewalks and streetlights. Can also be considered a permanent installation such as lighting, sidewalks, buildings and water systems.

**land use designations** – A classification system for the designation of appropriate use of properties. The land use designations include the various residential, commercial/industrial, recreational and public service land uses assigned to property.

**level of service (LOS)** – is a qualitative measure of traffic intensity describing operational conditions within traffic stream, and their perception by motorists and/or passengers. An LOS definition generally describes these conditions in terms of such factors as speed, travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort and convenience, and safety.

**Local Coastal Program** – Local Coastal Programs (LCPs) are basic planning tools used by local governments to guide development in the coastal zone, in partnership with the Coastal Commission. LCPs contain the ground rules for future development and protection of coastal resources. Each LCP includes a land use plan and measures to implement the plan (such as zoning ordinances). Prepared by local government, these programs govern decisions that determine the short- and long-term conservation and use of coastal resources.

**marine mammal haulout area** – The term used when marine mammals pull themselves out of the water to rest. Groups of marine mammals often rest closely packed together at favored haul-out sites.

**mitigation** – Mitigation includes: (a) Avoiding an impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action; (b) Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation; (c) rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment; (d) Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; (e) compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

**open space** – Land that is maintained in its natural state for its intrinsic and/or open space value (buffer, habitat preservation, heritage tree stands, park and recreation, conservation of natural resources or historic or scenic purposes.) For example, parks are often classified as open space in many city and county general plans, yet golf courses may not qualify.

**open space district** – A special district formed for the purpose of acquiring, operating or managing open space and conservation lands. Open space districts may receive funding from traditional property taxes or other sources.

**ophiolites** – Rock formations consisting of pieces of oceanic plate that have been thrust onto the edge of continental plates; thought to be the result of sea-floor rifting or crustal plate collisions.

**prime farmland** – land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and that is available for these uses.

**purchase of development rights (PDR)** – Under a PDR program, a local government agency can set funds aside to purchase easements from landowners, using funding programs such as the California Farmland Conservancy Program.

**riparian (land, area or habitat)** – The land and vegetation bordering a natural watercourse such as a river or stream. Riparian habitat provides food, nesting habitat, cover, migration corridors, riverbank protection, erosion control and improved water quality, and numerous recreational and esthetic values.

**Santa Barbara gyre** – a large eddy created by the California Current forced offshore near Point Conception. This gyre system generally flows in a counter-clockwise direction between the Santa Barbara coast and the Channel Islands.

**silviculture** – a phase of forestry that deals with the

establishment, development, reproduction, and care of forest trees.

**socioeconomic analysis** – The task of assessing the impact of a plan or project on a community's or region's social structure, on a community's fiscal health, on a region's economic basis, and similar socioeconomic considerations.

**Southern California bight (SCB)** – The marine system that extends from Point Conception to Punta Banda in Baja California, Mexico. It is referred to as a “bight” because the characteristic north-south trending coastline of western North America experiences a significant curvature along the coast of southern California, creating a marine environment of complex circulation patterns.

**special assessment** – Assessment by a public agency on lands that will be benefited by a public service, such as the acquisition of park or open space lands or the development of facilities resulting from these assessments.

**special district** – Any local or regional public agency, other than a city, county, or school district, formed to designate an area within which a property tax rate will be levied to pay for a service or improvement benefiting that area. Special districts include county service areas, maintenance districts, and regional park districts.

**special resource study** – A study conducted by the National Park Service to determine whether an area is appropriate to be managed as a unit of the National Park System. It considers whether: (1) the resources in the area are nationally significant, (2) there are other means of protecting the area's resources, (3) the area's resources are already represented in the National Park System, and (4) if it is feasible for the NPS to protect and manage the resources. Also known as a feasibility study.

**state land conservancy** – An independent state agency established to fund or acquire and manage land in order to preserve open space or habitat, provide for low-impact recreational or educational uses, or other similar purposes, with a specific regional focus.

**strand** – a border, edge, seashore; the land bordering a body of water; the beach of the ocean; a sea or an arm of the ocean; the land alternatively covered or uncovered by the tide.

**taxon** – a taxonomic category or unit, as a species or family.

**transfer of development rights (TDR)** – A program which allows relocation of potential development from areas where proposed land use or environmental impacts are considered undesirable to another site chosen on the basis of its ability to accommodate

additional units of development beyond that for which it was zoned, with less environmental, social, and aesthetic impact.

**unincorporated area** – A community or rural area that is not located within a city.

**urban rural boundary line (URBL)** – The urban rural boundary line sets the limit for urban expansion in unincorporated areas of the county. Urban development and services cannot extend outside the boundary.

**vernal pool** – seasonal bodies of water that form in depressions located in soils with impenetrable substances such as clay. They typically hold water during rainy seasons and completely dry up in dry seasons. Because of these unique characteristics and their rarity, vernal pools generally support rare species.

**watershed** – The total area above a given point on a waterway that contributes water to its flow; the entire region drained by a waterway or watercourse; the geographical area drained by a river and its connecting tributaries into a common drainage. Usually bounded peripherally by a natural divide of some kind such as a hill, ridge, or mountain.

**zoning** – The division of a city or county into areas, or zones, which specify allowable uses for real property and size restrictions for buildings and lots within these areas. A zoning ordinance is a law that divides land into zones, specifies uses permitted in each zone, and standards required for each use. Typical zoning classifications include different types of agricultural, residential, industrial and commercial zones.

*Majority of definitions adapted from “A Park and Recreation Professionals’ Glossary”, California Department of Parks and Recreation Planning Division, January 1, 2003, .*

*Other definitions from California State Law, CEQ (NEPA), and Santa Barbara County*